

VICARIATE OF WHITEHORSE

General Notes.

1. - *Religious Vicariate and Vicarial House.* Our Oblate Vicariate of Whitehorse was canonically erected on September 15th, 1944, within the boundary limits of the then newly-formed Apostolic Vicariate of Whitehorse, i.e. the whole Yukon Territory and the northern part of British Columbia. Our first Vicar of Missions was his Excellency Bishop Coudert, O.M.I.; his episcopal residence of Whitehorse became also our vicarial residence. Later, on February 16th, 1957, with the nomination of a new Vicar of Missions, the vicarial residence was transferred to Lower Post until 1963 when Teslin was preferred as a more central location; however, so far, we do not have a vicarial house belonging to the Oblates for the exclusive use of the Vicar of Missions. In his last Act of Visitation, V. Rev. Father Walsh, O.M.I. writes: « In fact the Visitor feels that the day has come when the Provincial should have a permanent residence, more centrally located, i.e. at Whitehorse ». p.9. When V. Rev. Father Drear, O.M.I. was nominated for a third term in 1963, a new vicarial council was also designated.

2. *Canonical Visitation.* We wish here to thank the General Administration for sending us a Canonical Visitor such as V. Rev. John Walsh, O.M.I. We feel, after reading his act of Visitation, that he made a point to study deeply our northern country, the special conditions of our flock, the specific character of our ministration and therefore the necessary adaptation of our religious and Oblate life: « not brothers living necessarily under the same roof but in the same district, members of the same moral person, the Vicariate of Whitehorse ». His Act of Visitation could have

been presented as an honest Report to the General Chapter; we wish again to thank the V. Rev. Father for his loyal evaluation of our potentialities, defects and needs, and kindly beg his permission to quote him in this report.

3. *Our Rugged Country.* To a tourist, to a fervent of natural sceneries, our district reveals many picturesque grandeurs and fascinating oddities; to one who has lived several years in our areas however, the famous words of Robert Service in his poem « The Law of The Yukon » remain a bare reality « Only the fit and the strong survive ». Mother Nature with its abrupt changes of weather, with its extreme fluctuations of temperature, periodically takes fancy to induce any Yukoner to a disruption of a well-planned and regular life. During three months, we proudly become part of the « Land of the Midnight Sun » in fact, this pompous phrase designs our short summer. The long period of cold that follows with its scanty hours of daylight engages us in a struggle for warmth, for survival and joins hands with "distances" (immense regions with few inhabitants) to produce *Isolation* and to foster idleness. Many Yukoners with meager religious supplies, away from home and family, looking then for an escape from loneliness and from selves, easily slip through the open door of drinking and immorality. The « per capita » percentage of the alcoholic beverage consumption and of suicide rates among the highest in the world. The « Wild North » is right! Many good families and homes were shattered to destruction after being caught by the « Lure of the Yukon », that is, a spirit of materialism, of freedom, of worldliness and of pleasure. Of course, we have many sound healthy pioneers but it is good to know why a great number heads toward the North! Beyond the brim of the civilized world it is easier to skip away from duties, to hide a problem either social, legal or familial. Our good Fathers and Brothers are not immuned to this devastating atmosphere. They have to be on guard at all time and realize more than ever that only « the fit » survive, and here « fitness » includes physical, mental, social as well as spiritual fitness. Therefore, only the best should be sent here.

4) *Population*. The entire population of our large Vicariate is only 17,503. Gathered in one restricted area, it would nicely form a fair sized parish requiring the ministry of only three or four priests, but scattered over thousands of miles, our Oblate group faces a giant task, « a man's job » requiring the tops of what Pope Pius XI called « specialists in the most difficult missions ». Our cosmopolitan population includes, besides the English speaking, British, Canadian or Americans, other ethnic groups of importance: French, Italian, German, Hungarian. They may be part of our seasonal labour force, listed among the semi-permanent number of our businessmen or government employees, the core of our white population. Our growing native population is more stable, yet greatly puzzled with problems of adjustment to a new world of realities and values. They have to overcome the shock of two white invasions: « The Gold Rush, 1898, and The Alcan Highway, 1942 ». Our modern civilization has disrupted their traditional, social and economic life without offering them a worthy substitute... they feel like the little David in Saul's armour; but like him, ready to discard it. It is good to recall that they are part of a first generation of Catholics requiring to be spoon fed, guided with light and zeal, disciplined with much patience and kindness, instructed with words and examples.

5) *Religion*. A stranger entering a small Yukon village may be well impressed at the sight of two or three churches for a population of 100 to 300 and think « they are certainly well looked after spiritually ». But, to us, to the natives, it means confusion... for, each church claims to relay to them the true spirit and doctrine of Christ. Catholicism represents the greatest homogenous group as to form one-third of the Vicariate population, 5,599; the remaining two-thirds claim affiliation to the more orthodox as well as to the more bizarre sects, all abundantly supplied with funds, men and zeal. Following is a list of churches found in Whitehorse or in other locations throughout the Vicariate: Anglican, Baptists (two different groups), Lutheran, United Church of Canada, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Jehovah Witnesses, Baha'i, Mormon... others also are sending missionaries.

6) *Truly Oblate Territory*. With the exception of one or two secular priests, our Vicariate is exclusively Oblate territory. In presenting the last Act of Visitation, Our Most Rev. Father General bears testimony to this in these words: « You are the ones who have built up this Vicariate for the Church under the authority and inspiration of your venerable Bishop ». Then V. Rev. Fr. Walsh continues in his introduction: « I think every Oblate thinks of and refers to our Northern missions with a sense of special pride. The name of the Oblates is somehow linked to the Far North. In their eyes, the far North is almost considered to be sacred ». Now as Oblates, individual members, as a Vicariate, as a Congregation, how do we respond to this mark of confidence of the Church in entrusting to our cares this forsaken part of the world? Do we take this venture seriously? Do we supply this far away North with the fittest men? Are we not at present relaxing; satisfied with our past progress, resigned to hold on? What are we doing to preserve the physical and the spiritual health of our actual labourers?

Our Vicariate is a truly Oblate mission because our apostolate forces us to live in a newly open area, often under the most primitive conditions, even though these conditions have improved considerably in the last decade. Our brother Oblates are always in contact with the poor... Natives who depend greatly upon the Providence of God for their survival; some self-supporting, others relying mostly on our welfare minded Government, others spending foolishly their income without a thought given to possible hardships in the days to come.

Hearing of all the opportunities of the North, many come here unprepared; if they are common labourers, they may wait a long while on the unemployed list. The adventurers soon find themselves in the same predicament. Our missions mark a haven for the poor where they find shelter, food, clothing and most probably the necessary guidance for the next wise move. In Whitehorse, this work of mercy is effectively magnified due to the cooperation of the Staff workers of Madonna House who supervised an institution in favor of the poor called « Maryhouse ». Where the poor are, there also the Oblates! God only knows how many

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poor there are *in our Yukon*, this dreamland of the Klondikers, where every stream flows over gold nuggets, where every hill is lined with silver!

Moral poverty often travels along the path of financial poverty. Yes the most abandoned souls are to be found here... abandoned! Where? By whom? By no one but by themselves. Desperate men of all walks of life have tramped our northern frontiers... so-called atheists, deeply set in their ways who have created a kind of vacuum around themselves by preaking all human ties; family, country, language, ethnic group, etc., leaving no adress, unknown to all... tough to the core: « This is the way I lived, this the way I shall die »; bitter and sarcastic, « where there is a dollar bill, don't worry, you will find a church »; human, condescending after all, « I like you but I don't like your church ». As a conclusion, any scandal found in the secular press will snowball to form a shield for a fallen away; to serve as an excuse to stalk, to resist our religious testimony. We have to be here, on call at all time! Our presence means a silent preaching, our prayer remains an unknown source of grace. Every year our ministry is blessed with many returns; fallen away or even renegades asked for a priest in time to come back, to make their peace with God.

Our vicariate is worth our efforts! It is yet a truly mission territory depending on the Catholic world for funds as well as for missionary workers. Our missionary effort varies according to places. Here, it is strictly an apostolate of presence, a long, patient work of placing Christ, his Church, his grace, his sacraments at the reach of all men of good will. There, we try to keep our faithful on the level in the midst of so many erroneous lines of thoughts, in constant sight of scandalous situations. It means continuous attention... we must spend hours in frequent and friendly visits. Elsewhere we have a group of men of good will asking for instructions; we must prepare carefully this great hour when a new convert swears a lifelong allegiance to his God. There is a saying here: « In the Yukon, we do not count souls but weigh them ». Finally in this particular area, our missionaries make a tactful attempt to rescue the lost sheep, the fallen away... « When I was young, religion was forced into

my throat, I gave it up ». These were very good families; many parents and friends are anxious about their salvation and are praying for them, it means a patient and long wait for us.

7) *Visitors*. During the dark and strenuous hours of their ministry, our Oblates welcome the comforting visits of their immediate superiors both ecclesiastical and religious. Bishop Coudert used to spend at least three days in each mission taking opportunity of this occasion to **preach a short mission**. The present Provincial stays about a week assisting us in our ministry, besides offering a hand in cooking or doing other material chores. It is a fine time where we can take up, discuss matters concerning our apostolate, our mission, our person and our religious life. Our needs are studied, the burden of our lonely life is shared, it is good to feel the presence of a brother, to be able for a few hours to lead a more regular life.

8) *Events of historical importance since 1959*. June 24th, 1960, dedication of the new Sacred Heart Cathedral. This date marked also the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Sacred Heart Parish.

September, 1960, on the 12th, opening of our new Catholic High School at Riverdale, directed by the Sisters of Providence; on the 15th, opening of the newly-built Hostel for the Catholic Indians, under the direction of the Lay Institute of Madonna House.

In his circular of Jan 14th, 1961, His Excellency Bishop Coudert announced that our Provincial has moved his temporary headquarters from Lower Post to Teslin.

Jubilees. On June 7th, 1961 our Vicariate was honoured with the presence of our Most Rev. Father General at the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of Episcopate of our beloved Bishop J.L. Coudert, O.M.I. On this day, His Excellency was appointed Assistant to the Pontifical Throne.

Since 1959, five of our fathers celebrated their silver jubilee of ordination: Father A. Monnet, O.M.I., on March 1st, 1961; Father P. Poulet, O.M.I., July 5th, 1961; Father F. Triggs, O.M.I., on June 4th, 1962; while July 3rd, 1963

marked the double jubilee of Fathers J. Plaine, O.M.I., and M. Bobillier, O.M.I.; Brother Yvon Mercier, O.M.I. celebrated his 25th anniversary of religious life in July, 1961.

New Buldings. In Fort Nelson district, Our Lady of Sorrows Church has been completed. Another Chapel was erected near the new Indian Village of Mile 295.

St. Ann's at Watson Lake has a resident priest since Sept. 7th, 1962. A new separate school was open under the direction of the Sisters of Mission Service in Sept. 1964.

Beaver Creek, Mile 1202 on the Alaska Highway, developed into a more important settlement requiring the building of a new Mission Chapel... in 1963.

As the Indians came back to their old village of Iskut Lake, the place was renovated. The Indian Department built a two-classroom Catholic school, we built a new church and residence. Now the Sisters of Mission Service have accepted to teach there.

Airplane Lake in the Cassiar district saw also the erection of a secondary chapel.

At Carmacks, the Mission built in 1955 was moved to a more central location across the Yukon River in 1963, to become part of a compact unit church-hall-residence.

School Question. A great achievement for our Catholic population was the official recognition of our Catholic schools. From the time of the Gold Rush, we had a Catholic school in Dawson City; later after the war, another Catholic school was established in Whitehorse by the Sisters of Providence; both schools were subsidised by Territorial grants. Was it a mere kindness on the part of the authority or was it a recognized right? It was a debated question over which our Bishop, many of our Fathers, and other members of our laity sweated and ardently strived to obtain an adequate solution. Our Territorial School Ordinance of 1962, along with a special agreement between the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory and the Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Whitehorse seemed to bring about a satisfactory solution. The School Ordinance states under Sect. 9: "The Commissioner may operate and maintain schools established by him pursuant to section 8 for the education of children

of the Roman Catholic faith ». According to the terms of the Agreement, all expenditures related to our separate schools to include the building cost, the maintenance, and teacher's salaries are paid by the Territorial Government. The Episcopal Corporation has the prerogative of selecting the teachers, either religious or lay teachers.

Other events were wrapped in a shroud of sadness. Death claimed her toll to carry to their reward Father Caron in 1961, and Father Arsenault in 1963. This year 1963 saw also the departure of the Sisters of Saint Ann from Dawson City where many of their Sisters devoted their lives either to the sick at St. Mary's Hospital, or to the children of the local Catholic School. This year, 1965, saw the retirement of Bishop Coudert as Vicar Apostolic of Whitehorse. Without refusing work, he thought as he said, that it would be for the best interest of the Vicariate and of the church to pass the yoke to a younger man. For us who have lived with him we must congratulate him for his untiring efforts in promoting Christ's kingdom, we must praise him for the wonderful achievements he is leaving us; finally, we can borrow the words of V. Rev. Father Walsh: « Your Vicariate and the Congregation as a whole sees in him a lasting example of the true Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate ».

Our Personnel. Our actual personnel numbers only 27 which includes one retired Bishop; 22 Priests, and 4 Brothers.

Comparing with previous reports our number has decreased steadily while we have several new foundations bringing an increased amount of work. In 1953 our total number was 33, in 1959 it was 31, while the number of our brothers remained unchanged. Partial cause of this decrease can be stated as follows: two were stricken quite unexpectedly by serious diseases; three returned to their native provinces without being replaced; one was transferred to the Alberta-Saskatchewan; and one left the Vicariate and later the Congregation.

Our cosmopolitan faithful appreciate the fact that our Oblates come from several parts of the world, are of different racial origin and most of them speak several languages;

eleven fathers are from France, four from Western Canada, two from Eastern Canada, two from the United States, one from Holland, Belgium and Ireland. Our four Brothers are from Eastern Canada.

The average age of the Fathers stand presently as 45.8; the age of the Brothers is 44/7. Seven fathers worked in the Vicariate since its foundation in 1944, eight have labored more than fifteen years, five count ten years, another has nearly ten years while only one has less than five years in our Vicariate.

As a rule our health has been good; however during the last few years the state of health is considered only as fair. Certainly, a greater attention should be given to this important item.

Here are some remarks taken from V. Rev. Father Walsh (Act p. 2) « At the time of the Visitation you were some 25 Fathers and 4 Brothers. In other areas such a number of Fathers might seem high. In your area you could easily use a few more — in fact they are necessary. » Concerning the Brothers, he continues: « It is unfortunate that they are not more numerous. Their religious life and their services could be multiplied in many ways, particularly in helping to construct churches and rectories. » *ibid.* p. 4. (4)

Apostolic Life. « There is considerable variety in the field of your activity. You serve whites and Indians, scattered along the highway or out on trap-lines or clustered around the mission; you have camps of various kinds, lumber, construction, mining and military; there are a few established and growing parishes, Dawson, Whitehorse, Fort Nelson; you have an Indian Residential School which is a hive of activity with its almost 200 children; you have the mission of Old Crow where two valiant Oblates live completely isolated from their brethren, living in an Anglican stronghold, with not a convert Indian to show after eight years of effort; it is doubtful if any Vicariate has more varied situations of apostolate. » These words of Rev. Father Birch written six years ago remain true with few adaptations...

Our Apostolic Life.

This variety of apostolic works can be grouped under few general headings.

1) Missions among infidels and non catholics.

This type of work constitutes the most common task of our Fathers. Here we must implant the Church, bring the good news of redemption to all. Presently we have reached the limits of this expansion, any man of good will living within the boundaries of our Vicariate can possibly come in contact with the priest, the church, and Christ. With the prospect of winning more souls, our Fathers are constantly visiting their flock. From their main post in the more important communities, they minister regularly to their secondary chapels and then to the outposts or camps. Right now, due to a shortage of missionaries, the priest in charge lives alone, isolated; 100 miles or more often separate him from his closest neighbour. The maintenance of his house and of his chapel requires much of his time; cooking, house cleaning, heating and laundry are tedious chores, only a well ordered, well organized life will allow him to survive, to dedicate enough time to the essentials of his physical, intellectual, religious and apostolic life. Every Father strives to be a model to his people in the line of order, care and cleanliness. Many have a spotless residence, others allow a healthy infiltration of modern progress. Years ago, our water supply was found in the nearest lake or creek, now, most have good wells, some even regular bathroom facilities. The whites in our communities, mostly Government employees, are well provided with very comfortable dwellings; by contrast, other whites often fall below the level of the native population. Our Fathers are an inspiration to all, admitting a sound comfort which any poor could afford, if they had their genuine sense of economy and progress. Atlin, Burwash Landing, Carmacks, Old Fort Nelson, Iskut Lake, Old Crow, Teslin, Telegraph Creek and Upper Liard Bridge are representative of this category. Most of these missions have what we may call a permanent dwelling, solid frame construction with basement and well insulated. Our missionaries here again have achieved wonders if we

compare the low cost to the real value of our missions. These improved living accommodations have reduced considerably the amount and urgency of our manual labour; the final task of embellishing our properties and their surroundings can more easily be extended to a longer period of time. The wide-spread distribution of our population requires a great amount of traveling; between twenty and fifty thousand miles a year in certain areas. It is astonishing to find in our remote regions such a good and great highway system. Each mission is provided with means of transport ordinarily a pick-up, a panel or a station wagon of a modest type. Only two missions: Old Fort Nelson and Ross River have preserved the old reliable "dog team" for winter travel; Old Crow has invested in a Ski-Doo as an experiment. In all these missions, the character and the quality of our faithful varies a great deal from Old Crow, where not even one convert was registered in thirteen years of prayer and labor, to the more progressive communities like Iskut Lake, Teslin, Burwash and Carmacks.

2) Mostly Parish Work.

To this class belong Whitehorse, Dawson, Fort Nelson, Cassiar, Mayo and Watson Lake. We find here a fair comfortable standard of living with oil heating system and other usual commodities: water works, electricity and telephone, these latter services have also reached smaller communities. At the Bishop's residence in Whitehorse, we are fortunate to have assistance of the Sisters of the Missions Service who look after the cooking, the laundry and other household duties, while Brother Mercier is the handiman, sacristan, janitor and sees to the multiple other material cares of the cathedral, the residence and the C.Y.O. hall. Elsewhere, there is no appointed helper for these ordinary domestic duties. Our congregations might represent the greater homogenous group of Christians, however lost in the entire community it means only one third lost in the midst of people of all calibres, reanging from atheists, pagan, or bitter anti-catholics to men of good will, much impressed by the dedication and the perseverent work of our Fathers. Conversion is the work of grace and often the fruit of

much prayer and patience. Whitehorse, Dawson and Watson Lake have a Catholic separate school where the Fathers teach catechism daily; elsewhere classes are held after school either in the classroom or at the rectory.

3) Mining Communities.

« Mining communities », this term is used to design a place where mining operations have progressed to a point where the establishment of a crusher and of a mill was required and thus has attracted not only the single miners but also a group of families. It is considered stable though with the fluctuation of the stock market, it might fold up overnight. As a rule, the mines authorities include in their developement plans, the building of houses, of a store, and a recreation centre; the Government establishes a school; we provide our Catholics with a church. Elsa, Calumet and Keno formed the United Keno Hill Mines group, the mineral processed here is galena bearing silver, lead and zinc. Cassiar not far from the Dease River is another typical mining community where asbestos is found in a very great quantity. Our ministry is very similar to parish work with problems added due to the ever moving flow of the population and to the resemblance or dissemblance and moral quality of the miners. In Dawson City area, Bear Creek is a small mining community where the gold discovered by the dredges of the surrounding creeks or rivers, is processed and molded into bricks. The school children attend classes in Dawson, only a few miles away; we have a secondary chapel where Mass is offered nearly every week. At Clinton Creek forty miles from Dawson, asbestos deposit is being explored and may develop into a mine.

4) Mining and Highway Camps.

These camps are found twenty to fifty miles away from the more important communities and differ greatly in size and importance; in some there is no school, in others there is one, ordinarily Mass is said either in the recreation room or in a private home depending greatly on the catholic population. In these camps, our catholics are happy to receive us and appreciate openly our visits when they seem to secure our ministration all for themselves; in many

instances, they take occasion of these meetings to invite other well meaning non catholics. Besides the highway camps, Carmacks district has two smaller mining camps, Discovery Mines at Mount Freegold and Mount Nansen Mines. This individualized ministry requires much dedication, tact and zeal. Many Fathers are faithful to these visits despite the very severe cold of our winter months. In Fort Nelson, we find oil exploration camps. Watson Lake looks after Tungsten Mines; Ross River has also two mining camps.

5) Indian School.

Another important field of apostolate enlisting the efforts of five Oblates, two fathers and three brothers, is the Indian Residential school of Lower Post. The Sisters of St. Ann manage the academic aspect of the school. The greatest hopes of our Vicariate were built on this institution. Here is a quotation from Father Ryan's Act of Visitation in 1950: « One of the greatest blessings that has descended upon this progressive Vicariate, is, undoubtedly, the acquisition and the building of the new Residential School for Indian children at Lower Post. Under Divine Providence, this great achievement is due to the untiring efforts of His Lordship Bishop Coudert. We congratulate His Lordship for having succeeded in securing for the Vicariate this veritable « Power-House » for good... I consider this school a most providential acquisition for the Vicariate... I must appeal earnestly to you all, to take a great personal interest in it, and, to leave nothing undone to make this school an impregnable citadel of our Holy Faith. Every district and every mission, in the entire Vicariate, will in time and to varying degrees, reap rich spiritual blessings from this nursery of Christian culture and of solid piety ». Now with the building of local schools in the remotest areas, the policy of the Indian Affairs Branch of keeping Residential Schools only for the destitutes, the children of settlements where no other school facility is provided, has greatly circumscribed the influence of this school. In Whitehorse a Catholic Hostel, built by the Indian Affairs Branch is operated under the combined direction of two lay Institutes: « Voluntas Dei » and the O.M.M.I. In these institu-

tions, it is easy to guide and supervise our youth in its search for knowledge and virtue. So far the fruits of these institutions were immense, let us hope that the future will increase and guaranty their fields of action and of effectiveness. At Prophet River and Iskut Lake, we have an Indian Catholic day school in the village.

6) Chaplains.

During the last six years, our Oblates served as Chaplains of the Armed Forces or other institutions particularly in the city of Whitehorse. In 1964, the Canadian Army officially left our Territory, however, part of the Air Force is still on duty here. The two former Chapels of the Armed Forces are kept open and our Fathers hold regular services. Father Monnet, besides his activities as Chancellor of the Apostolic Vicariate, is the Chaplain of the Air Force, the local central Hospital and of the Community of the Sisters of Providence. His work, at the Hospital is very important; here he comes in contact with patients brought in from all parts of our immense Territory. His time consuming visits to all are appreciated, there are many confessions and communions before serious operations; the fine group of Catholic nurses or staff members are thankful for his counsels, advise or other consolations of our holy religion. Another Father visits the local jail. Until now our local jail was only a short term institution; lately plans were made for a greater Territorial institution and construction is now under way, such an undertaking will require at least a part time chaplain. In Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake and Fort Nelson we have hospitals built and run by the Department of Northern Health; the local pastor, as a rule, visits these when they are aware of the presence of Catholic patients. Wherever possible, our Fathers have organized some forms of catholic action, sponsoring the establishment of pious societies: Holy Name Society, Catholic Women's League, Catholic Youth Organization, The Legion of Mary or similar groups to promote the better understanding of our spiritual life, to deepen our sense of belonging and to be of our age, to spread the spirit of ecumenism.

Religious Life. Religious life does not differ in essence from the average christian life; a religious aims higher and engages himself on a well protected route. As Oblates, we must live... « dans la volonté persévérante d'atteindre la cime de la perfection, en société, afin qu'ils coopèrent plus efficacement au salut des âmes et à leur sainteté personnelle »... therefore we seek greater ideals, we plan a more elaborate structure, and to succeed, we select the safeway of the vows, of the community life, of a rule approved by Holy Mother Church.

In our Vicariate, only two residences can afford the rigid framework of the community life, Whitehorse and Lower Post. Elsewhere, our Fathers live alone. Indeed, we belong to the congregation, the community at large, the community of spirit; we coast along the line of our great ideal, guided by the spirit of the rules, mindful of our engagements and of our obligations; however, being alone, creates a permanent danger, without the assistance of a brother, it is easy to slip, to relax a little from the good habits acquired in our years of training. Our religious superiors often insist on the necessity of a good daily timetable allowing hours for daily exercises and solid intellectual work; it is essential to remain faithful to this spade work otherwise we easily become one of the crowd, a good guy, but a weak spiritual booster.

Three of our young fathers had the wonderful experience of a « De Mazenod retreat », similar opportunities were given to others to attend special conferences either spiritual or in the line of Catholic Action or catechesis. Our annual retreats are faithfully attended by all and our retreats masters, usually an Oblate from a Canadian Province, leave well impressed by the serious and fervor of all. Our monthly retreats contribute a great deal in refreshing us; depending on the weather and temperature, they are regularly held in Whitehorse, Lower Post and Dawson areas. Seen as a group, of course, everything is great, wonderful. Our fathers are charitable, attentive to their ministry, devoted to their faithful. Is it enough to brand them all as great Oblates? We have a name to live up to, our Northern trails were blazed by giant hands. From the beginning, we are more than

ordinary priests and religious, we have vicarial functions: to replace older orders, to make up for the loss, to draw souls to Christ. Our intentions are sound, our efforts laudable but, our ministry calls us in the world, forces us to breathe a worldly air; with the drawbridge of our community life down, our sole defense, our last hope rests in deep personal contacts with the Saviour, a Mass offered with calm and attention, the Holy Office recited with exactitude and fervor, our visits and examen with trust and love, our mental prayer the soul of our apostolate.

The Rules. A Committee for the Revision of the Rules was established in the Vicariate of Whitehorse on July 2nd, 1960. It went to work immediately. The work of revision was conducted by questionnaires sent to each individual Oblate Father and Brother.

A first report was sent to the CRR in Rome in August 1960. Another followed in the course of 1961. These reports gave the responses of the majority and mentioned the various opinions of the minority and the number of those who didn't send any reply, which number was very small.

In November, 1961 we were honored with the visit of Rev. G. Fortin, President of the CRR in Rome. At a meeting of the local CRR called by our visitor at the Vicarial House and to which the Oblates of the vicinity had been invited a review of the work accomplished to far was made. Father Fortin, President of the CRR noted with unconcealed satisfaction the great interest taken in the work by the Oblates of the Vicariate. He exposed the various problems confronting his committee. He urged ut to carry on the work of revision despite the difficulty of the task due to the scattering of our numbers in a vast Territory.

New questionnaires were sent out to the missionaries. The replies were compiled at the time of Retreats. On such occasions several sessions were held to further the work of revision.

The new Text of the Rules, published in the issue of Missions of June 1965 (No. 317) is now being studied. Remarks and suggestions will be entrusted to the members of the Chapter before they leave for Rome.

The Vows

Poverty. To the world, poverty has become a relative term. It does not any more design destitution or the state of one lacking of the primary necessities of life; one can be poor with a substantial income if he is unable to meet the obligations connected with his position or his level of life. Religious poverty however remains unchanged. Our Oblates here, as a rule, are faithful both to the letter and to the spirit of our Rules. Nevertheless there is always room for improvement. Permissions may be presumed too readily on shaky pretexts: « It is slightly over the amount allowed », « it is included in this other permission », « it is urgent and the Superior can't be easily reached », « it is a personal gift and needed in this new posting ». Did we see the selfish aim of this improvement... was it not for the sake of comfort? It is easy to overlook the poverty aspect in the generous use of alcoholic beverages or of cigarettes smoking. Due to this dimmed view of poverty, the last novelty becomes a necessity on a new car etc.. We are serving the poor; often they may not realize those details but our inconsiderate expenses may become a subject of talk if not of scandal. Are we at all times inspired by a true spirit of poverty?... Taking a devoted care of all objects, tools, properties; avoiding waste or misuse.

It is certainly not without reason that Bishop Coudert concluded his circular 63 with this paragraph: « Please, be very exact in entering in your account books all the money you receive in cash or cheques and all the money you actually spend or lend, noting clearly all the particulars. It is a matter of conscience for religious who have the vow of poverty, and it may even be a matter of justice, if your transactions affect Mass intentions or involve obligations for which the Vicariate may be held responsible in case of death or departure from the Vicariate ».

Chastity. The Yukon, of old, has the fame of being a free country, a land of freedom where all kinds of moral latitudes are allowed, « you can get away with murder » as the saying goes! The ordinary people may lead a disorderly

life and fail to understand our state of celibacy but, they will stand as severe judges if one of us was to relax or to lay grounds for suspicions on this matter. The departure of one of us since the last chapter certainly gives opportunity for a common examen. How could a sincere devoted man be lead astray? One does not reach such a state overnight, we must cultivate a special sense of awareness otherwise the world will slowly creep in, then invade our missions and our life through secular magazines, radio programmes, movies. Under the pretext of urgent material occupations, one devotes less time to prayer, to study, to preparation of Sunday's instructions; in order to stay popular among all, he will spend unreasonable time in hunting, in sports, tournaments. For reason of ministry, he will open our dwellings to secular persons or make a point to drop in unannounced or uninvited. We should proceed methodically in the visit of all our parishioners, otherwise, we will be found always at the same door. An apostolic thought should warrant any step outside of our missions and, if we suspect a dangerous meeting, we should honestly look for a companion, seek for the guidance of a confrere and remember the basic counsels of our rules... Imitation of our Lord's examples and the recourse to Our Immaculate Mother's protection. The Oblates of our Vicariate have often been cautioned in regard to secular periodicals, purely social visits, unguarded travels, and thanks to these repeated reminders, our group was protected even in failure of greater scandals.

Obedience. Obedience is the nerve, the backbone of our religious life. Most of our Oblates are admirable concerning this vow. They accept with promptitude new assignment, posting, obedience, this, at times, requires much abnegation and self sacrifice when it means leaving a long cherished congregation, a newly completed foundation and to go as a pioneer in an other hard district. Superficially again, no serious fault can be detected; however, a more attentive ear would perceive unkind remarks or critics as to wonder about our true spirit of obedience. If we differ in views with our Superiors, we may bring our reasons, display our doubts; but later when the Superior has decided, his conclusions must

be accepted with faith and reverence. « It is, of course, not always possible for a Superior to expose and discuss all the motives behind his decisions, but there are also times when he can do so and this may prove helpful ». (Act of Visitation 1964 V.F. Walsh, p. 9). It will profit much to our obedience if each one of us would make an effort to cultivate a deeper trust and confidence in our immediate Superiors. At times, some have the feeling of being under a divided authority and would prefer to go directly to the Vicar Apostolic for financial permissions as he is the main source of all our finances; however, we must remember that the present set up policy came into effect after long hours of prudent deliberation. In 1959, V. Rev. Father Birch clarified this point and gave us the true meaning of the Statutum whereby « the Church gives the congregation not only duties but also certain rights ».

Administration.

Under this heading, V. Rev. Father Walsh touched few questions in his Act of Visitation.

1) *Religious Districts*. « The Visitor believes the day has come for such a developement. The Visitor recommends therefore that the Provincial and his Council submit to the General Administration the results of a study they are now asked to undertake in this regard without undue delay ». p. 9.

A report was sent to Rome by the Vicarial Council in favor of establishing districts. Three districts could be formed, North, Central and South.

2) *Annexion*. « During the course of the Visitation the question was raised by a good number of the advisability of having your mission province attached to a larger province. Let it not be thought, however, that there was a general consensus on the matter ». As Father Visitor says there is no consensus here because the majority of the Fathers would prefer to remain independent. A complete survey of the opinions and a deep study of our conditions may lead to a more effective solution.

3) *Propaganda*. Most of our oblate vocations could be traced down to a meeting with a veteran Oblate Missionary.

Our Yukon Missions are certainly not known enough. Our film « The Law of the Yukon » was a revelation, not to say a surprise to the public, who has seen it. Greater efforts should be made to make our Missions known, in the congregation, in our houses of formation and more widely in the students world. This type of undertaking would help to furnish our district with the needed workers and also would help others.

Conclusion.

As a conclusion, let us say that our Oblates of the Whitehorse Vicariate have not forgotten their Immaculate Mother; half of our Missions are placed under her special patronage. « Outside this mission building (Old Crow) in the Land of the Midnight Sun and long Arctic winter, there stands a striking statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, surmounted by a steeple. This typical Oblate gesture in honor of the Mediatrix of all Grace proclaims our unerring and unshakeable confidence that she will secure ultimate victory at Old Crow ». (Father Birch 1959 p. 14.) One outdoors shrine stands near our Mission of Burwash Landing and twice in the short history of our Vicariate we have welcomed pilgrim Statues: Our Lady of the Cape in 1951, and later after the Marian Year of 1954 the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. This tender devotion of our Oblates for their Mother cannot fail but to become a source of blessings. Her presence is often felt. In our urgent needs we could hear her say to Him: « Look, they have no more wine », and looking towards us her watch word is always « Do whatever He tells you ».

Rev. J.P. TANGUAY, O.M.I.
Pro-Vicar of Missions

for Rev. A. DREAN, O.M.I.
Vicar of Missions